



**Montana Fish,  
Wildlife & Parks**

**PO Box 200701 Helena, MT 59620-0701  
(406) 444-9947**

## **ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST**

### **PART I. PURPOSE OF AND NEED FOR ACTION**

**1. Project Title:** Pondera Shooting Sports Club (PSSC)

**2. Type of Proposed Action:**

Finalize an expansion project for the trap range, including:

- Building a trap viewing/warming/safety shelter
- Completing a sidewalk around the PSSC building and trap range to achieve complete handicap accessibility
- Installing metal targets on the pistol range
- Installing a chain link fence closure to enhance safety on the pistol range.

**3. Location Affected by Proposed Action:**

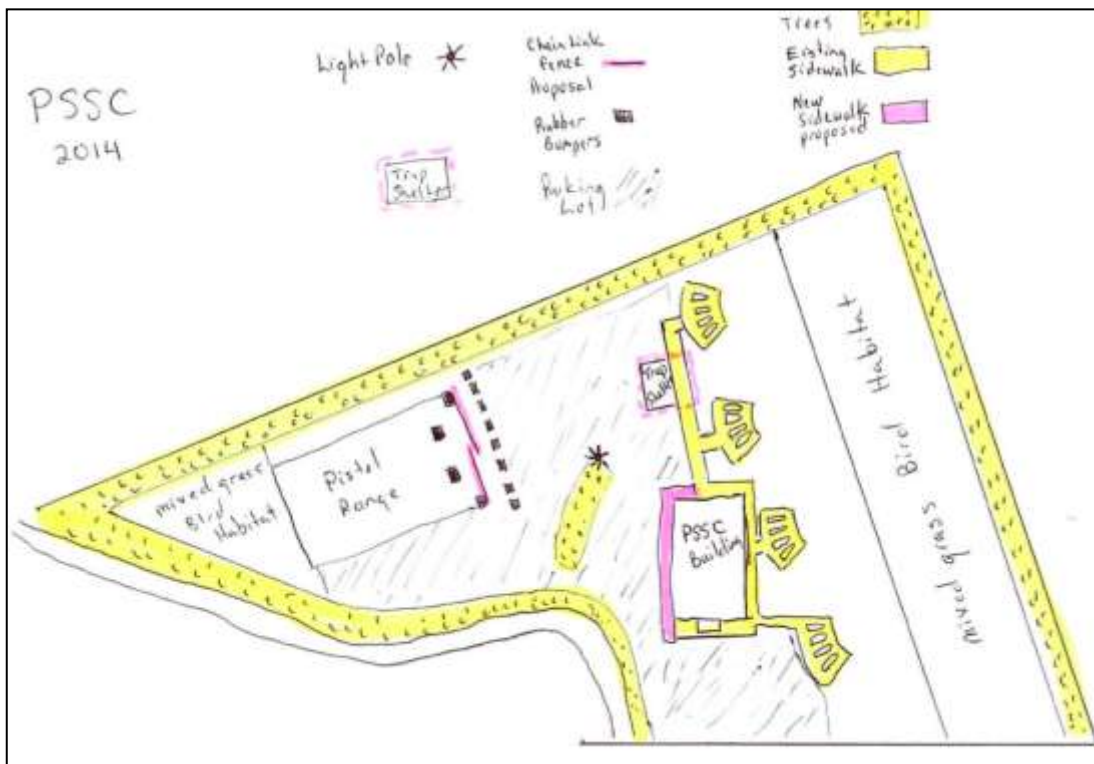
The Pondera Shooting Sports Gun Club (PSSC) is located at the corner of Granite and Spur Roads in Conrad, Montana (Figure 1). It is comprised of approximately 4.5 acres deeded to the Pondera Shooting Sports Club and 4.9 acres leased from Pondera County, Montana and is located in the SW  $\frac{1}{4}$ , NE  $\frac{1}{4}$ , SW  $\frac{1}{4}$  of Section 22, Township 28 North, Range 3 West, North  $48^{\circ} 09.837'$  West  $111^{\circ} 58.668'$ .



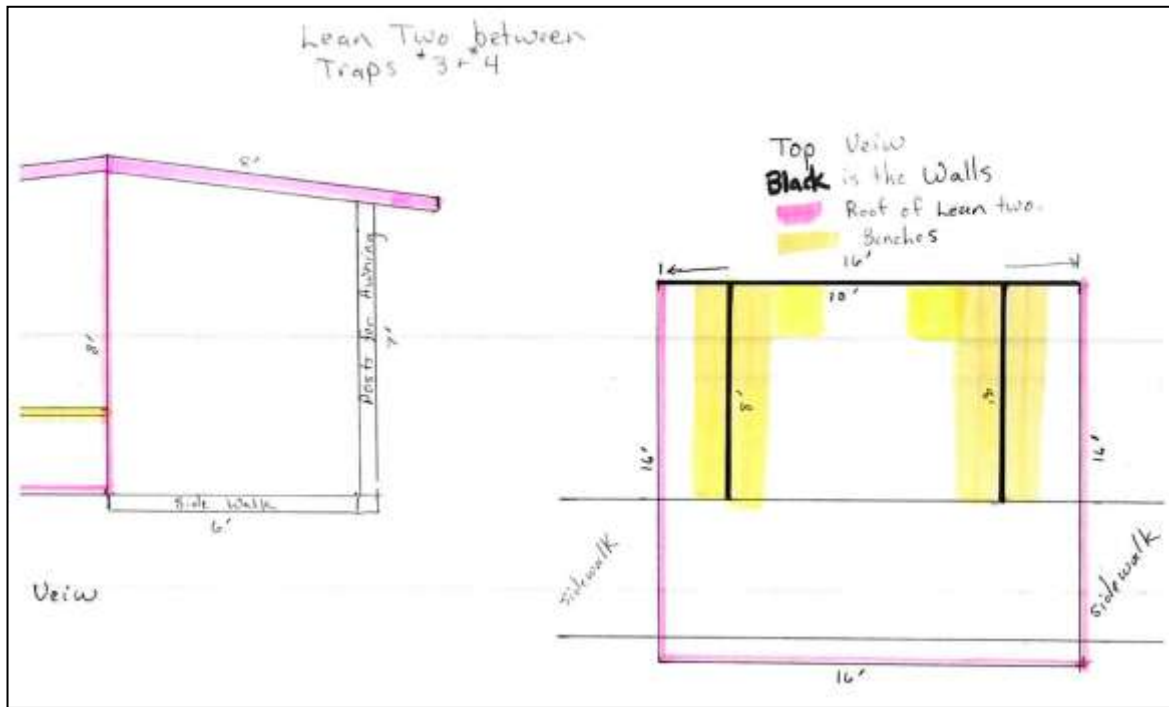
**Figure 1. Area Map Showing Location of the Pondera Shooting Sports Club.**



**Figure 2. Pondera Shooting Sports Club Complex.**



**Figure 3. Pondera Shooting Sports Club Proposed Improvements.**



**Figure 4. Proposed Trap Viewing/Warming/Safety Shelter.**

#### **4. Agency Authority for the Proposed Action:**

MCA 87-1-276 through 87-1-279 (Legislative established policies and procedures for the establishment and improvement of shooting ranges) and MCA 87-2-105 (Departmental authority to expend funds to provide training in the safe handling and use of firearms and safe hunting practices). The Montana Legislature has authorized funding for the establishment of a Shooting Range Development Program providing financial assistance for the development of shooting ranges. Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) has responsibility for the administration of the program, including the necessary guidelines and procedures governing applications for funding assistance under the program.

To be eligible for grant assistance, a private shooting club or a private organization:

- (a)(i) *Shall accept in its membership any person who holds or is eligible to hold a Montana hunting license and who pays club or organization membership fees;*
- (ii) *May not limit the number of members;*
- (iii) *may charge a membership fee not greater than the per-member share of the club's or organization's reasonable cost of provision of services, including establishment, improvement, and maintenance of shooting facilities and other membership services; and*
- (iv) *shall offer members occasional guest privileges at no cost to the member or invited guest and shall make a reasonable effort to hold a public sight-in day each September, when the general public may use the shooting range for a day-use fee or at no cost; or*
- (b) *Shall admit the general public for a reasonable day-use fee.*

#### **5. Need for the Action(s):**

Currently there is not a shelter at the trap range for safety, viewing, and warming; the building and trap range

are not 100% handicap accessible; and safety measures for the new pistol range are not completed, including metal targets and a chain link fence closure. There is a need to provide an area for the safety, convenience and comfort of shooters and spectators during league and competition shoots.

## **6. Objectives for the Action(s):**

The proposed project would complete the shooting range expansion project that was begun last year, including a trap range expansion and construction of an earthen structure for the pistol range. The completed project would provide a location for Pondera County residents to shoot hand guns, for hosting Becoming an Outdoor Woman (BOW) classes, and a training area for Hunter Education, 4-H shooting sports, firearms and archery training, concealed weapons and other firearms safety courses. In addition, the proposed project will improve the safety and comfort for both viewers and participants and improve handicap accessibility.

## **7. Project Size: estimate the number of acres that would be directly affected:**

Approximately 6.5 acres of the 9.4 acre Pondera Shooting Sports Club will be affected by the proposed project. The proposed shelter would be approximately 80 sq. ft. within the existing shooting range.

## **8. Affected Environment (A brief description of the affected area of the proposed project):**

The area affected is the Pondera Shooting Sports Club (PSSC), formerly the Conrad Gun Club, which has been in operation for many years. The property is located southwest of Conrad, MT and south of the Conrad Airport. The range is built upon former agricultural land and is bordered by cropland on the north and east, an irrigation ditch on the west, and Granite Road on the south, with cropland on the other sides of the ditch and road. The Conrad Airport is located less than ½ mile north of the club with cropland between the airport and range (Figure 2). There are no delineated wetlands, or natural water sources within the area proposed for development, though an irrigation ditch runs along the western border of the property.

The PSSC, a private non-profit shooting club, administers the shooting range. The shooting complex currently includes a trap shooting range, pistol and .22 mm rifle range, archery range, PSSC building, and a gravel parking area.

## **9. Description of Project:**

The trap shelter, located between traps #3 and #4, will measure 8'x10' with a roof overhang of approximately 3' and will consist of three walls, a roof, and benches. A cement sidewalk will be constructed along the west and half of the north sides of the clubhouse making the clubhouse and trap range 100% handicap accessible. Metal targets and a chain link fence will be installed at the pistol range to improve the safety of the pistol range (Figures 3 & 4).

## **10. List any Other Local, State, or Federal Agency that has Overlapping or Additional Jurisdiction:**

None

### **(a) Permits, Licenses and/or Authorizations:**

<u>Agency Name</u>	<u>Permit</u>	<u>Date Filed/#</u>
N/A		

### **Funding:**

<u>Agency Name</u>	<u>Funding Amount</u>
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks	\$11,584
In-kind labor, materials, and equipment	\$19,043
Pondera Shooting Sports Club	\$ 4,125

**11. Affiliations, Cooperating Agencies, User Groups and/or Supporting Groups:**

The shooting Club will be open to the public for shooting events, meetings, workshops, etc. Additionally, members of the public may purchase a membership, which allows them to utilize the facilities for individual shooting. Membership fees will help pay for utilities, insurance, and other ongoing expenses. Additional fundraisers will fund the remainder of the ongoing operating costs. League shooting is made up of team members from Conrad, Valier, Dupuyer, Chouteau, and Shelby, Montana. Other organizations that use the shooting range include: the Conrad Gun Club, Conrad Trap Club, Pondera Valley Rifle League, Archery Club, Pondera Sheriff's Department, FWP Hunter Education, Pondera County 4-H, FFA Club, Marias State Fair 4-H Shooters, Pondera Valley Small Bore Ledger, Small Bore-Brady Small Bore, Conrad High School Archery, Concealed Carry Instruction, and the Boy Scouts. Additionally the Conrad Police Department has shown interested in using the range for shotgun training.

**12. History of the Planning and Scoping Process, and Any Public Involvement:**

Proposed range improvements and safety enhancements had been discussed within the membership of the club and with the associated project vendors and contractors.

**13. List of Agencies Consulted/Contacted During Preparation of the EA:**

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

**14. Names, Address and Phone Number of Project Sponsor:**

Scott Johnson, 17 North Idaho, Conrad, MT 59425, (406) 590-3256

**15. Other Pertinent Information:**

Shooting range applications require the participating governing body to approve by resolution its submission of applications for shooting range-funding assistance. Resolution Date: April 1, 2014

**PART II. IDENTIFICATION OF THE PREFERRED ALTERNATIVES**

The proposed alternative A, alternative B and the no action alternative were considered.

**Alternative A (Proposed Alternative)** is as described in Part I, paragraph 9 (Description of Project). Build a trap shelter for safe viewing of trap shooting events; install a metal pistol target and a fence closure for the pistol range; and complete the cement sidewalk around the existing clubhouse to complete handicap accessibility. There are beneficial consequences to acceptance of the **Proposed Alternative (A)**.

**Alternative B (No Action Alternative)** Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks Shooting Range Development Grant money would be denied and the area will remain as an active shooting range without the proposed improvements. The PSSC may investigate other funding opportunities to build the trap shelter and other proposed improvements or reapply for an FWP Shooting Range Grant in the future. Future events that require a shelter at the shooting range would need to investigate other options.

**Describe any Alternatives considered and eliminated from Detailed Study:**

Only the proposed alternative and the no action alternative were considered. There were no other alternatives that were deemed reasonably available, nor prudent. Neither the proposed alternative nor the no action alternative would have significant negative environmental or potentially negative consequences.

**List and explain proposed mitigating measures (stipulations):** None

### **PART III. ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW**

Abbreviated Checklist – The degree and intensity determines extent of Environmental Review. An abbreviated checklist may be used for those projects that are not complex, controversial, or are not in environmental sensitive areas.

**Table 1. Potential impact on physical environment.**

<b>Will the proposed action result in potential impacts to:</b>	<b>Unknown</b>	<b>Potentially Significant</b>	<b>Minor</b>	<b>None</b>	<b>Can Be Mitigated</b>	<b>Comments Below</b>
1. Unique, endangered, fragile, or limited environmental resources				X		
2. Terrestrial or aquatic life and/or habitats				X		#2
3. Introduction of new species into an area				X		
4. Vegetation cover, quantity & quality				X		
5. Water quality, quantity & distribution (surface or groundwater)				X		#5
6. Existing water right or reservation				X		
7. Geology & soil quality, stability & moisture				X		#7
8. Air quality or objectionable odors				X		#8
9. Historical & archaeological sites				X		#9
10. Demands on environmental resources of land, water, air & energy				X		
11. Aesthetics				X		

**2. & 5.** There are no delineated wetlands and no natural water sources within the area proposed for development. A small footprint is all that is required for the construction of the proposed trap shelter and other improvements. No critical wildlife habitat would be affected. Any resident or transient wildlife may leave the immediate area while the construction is taking place.

**7.** The project will cause limited displacement of soils but the construction of these improvements will not substantially effect geological features or establish new erosion patterns. Soil disruption for this site is localized. Erosion control measures will be in effect and disturbed areas are to be reseeded.

**8.** Minor and temporary dust and vehicle emissions would be created by construction equipment during

the proposed improvements within the project area. However, the construction time is short and human effects will be limited due to the sparse population in the surrounding area.

**9.** This project uses no federal funds nor does it take place on state owned or controlled property; therefore, the Federal 106 Regulations and the State Antiques Act do not apply.

**Table 2. Potential impacts on human environment.**

<b>Will the proposed action result in potential impacts to:</b>	<b>Unknown</b>	<b>Potentially Significant</b>	<b>Minor</b>	<b>None</b>	<b>Can Be Mitigated</b>	<b>Comments Below</b>
1. Social structures and cultural diversity				<b>X</b>		
2. Changes in existing public benefits provided by wildlife populations and/or habitat				<b>X</b>		
3. Local and state tax base and tax revenue				<b>X</b>		
4. Agricultural production				<b>X</b>		<b>#4</b>
5. Human health				<b>X</b>		<b>#5</b>
6. Quantity & distribution of community & personal income				<b>X</b>		
7. Access to & quality of recreational activities				<b>X</b>		<b>#7</b>
8. Locally adopted environmental plans & goals (ordinances)				<b>X</b>		
9. Distribution & density of population and housing				<b>X</b>		<b>#9</b>
10. Demands for government services				<b>X</b>		
11. Industrial and/or commercial activity				<b>X</b>		

**4.** The proposed project will have no impact on agricultural production on neighboring property.

**5.** Range site plans, construction, and the ongoing operational and maintenance plans meet the standards of safety for the range participants and the public at large.

**7.** The range complex will provide year round controlled access and fulfils a need for a range to accommodate law enforcement training, hunter education, and public shooting.

**9.** The proposed project will have no impact on population distribution or density.



#### **PART IV. NARRATIVE EVALUATION AND COMMENT**

All of the pertinent or potential impacts of the project have been reviewed, discussed, and analyzed. None of the projects reviewed were complex, controversial, or located in an environmentally sensitive area. The projects being implemented are already on an existing range or altered areas that together with the insignificant environmental effects of the proposed action, indicates that this should be considered the final version of the environmental assessment. There are no significant environmental or economic impacts associated with the proposed alternative. The city council and the public support the Pondera Shooting Sports Club. Therefore, Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks should approve the proposed alternative (A) for the improvements as outlined in Part I, Para. 9.

#### **PART V. ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES**

**Does the proposed action involve potential risks or adverse effects, which are uncertain but extremely harmful if they were to occur?** NO

**Does the proposed action have impacts that are individually minor, but cumulatively significant or potentially significant?** Individually, the proposed actions have minor impacts. However, it was determined that there are no significant or potentially significant cumulatively impacts. Cumulative impacts have been assessed considering any incremental impact of the proposed action when they are combined with other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions, and no significant impacts or substantially controversial issues were found. There are no new hazards created with this project and there are no conflicts with the substantive requirements of any local, state, or federal law, regulation, standard or formal plan.

#### **Recommendation and justification concerning preparation of EIS:**

There are no significant environmental or economic impacts associated with the proposed alternative; therefore, an EIS is not required.

#### **PART VI. EA CONCLUSION SECTION**

#### **Individuals or groups contributing to, or commenting on, this EA:**

Scott Johnson, 17 North Idaho, Conrad, MT 59425, (406) 590-3256  
MT Fish Wildlife and Parks

#### **EA prepared by:**

Andrea Darling  
Darling Natural Resource Consulting  
39 Big Dipper Drive  
Montana City, MT 59634

**Date Completed:** April 8, 2014

#### **Describe public involvement, if any:**

This draft EA will be advertised on FWP's web site and through a legal ad in the *Independent-Observer* in Conrad, MT, on April 16, 2014, announcing a public comment period. A press release will also announce the project and comment period.